

Tax rate lower than projected

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Franklin responds to county tax issue

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Property owners will be getting some slightly better news when their tax bills arrive in the mail at the end of the week.

Newport The 2008 tax rate has been lowered by 46 cents by the New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration. Initially the tax rate was projected to be \$24.41 per \$1,000 of valuation. The new rate will be \$23.95.

In lowering the rate, the state made two revenue changes. The fund balance

was increased as was state catastrophic aid to the Newport School District, according to Newport finance director Paul Brown.

Brown said tax bills will be going out in the mail on Friday and will be due on Wednesday, Dec. 10.

When the projected tax rate was first announced, the increase was pegged at \$2.50 per \$1,000. The official increase is now \$2.04.

The breakdown has the town rate at \$8.72, down 14 cents over the initial projection; state school tax, \$2.14, down 2 cents; county tax, \$2.57, up 55 cents; and school

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tax, \$10.52, up \$1.65. The savings will lower the overall tax on property assessed at \$200,000 by \$92.

The board also addressed the deficit problems being experienced by Sullivan County.

"The deficit is incredible, it makes no sense," said board member Gary Nichols. "It's taking money from people in need." He suggested the county needs a highly-trained in-house person to oversee its finances.

Peter Franklin, D-Newport, chairman of the county delegation, said money has been included in the new county budget to hire such a person. "It's been advertised," he said of the position.

"We have three commis-

sioners and an administrator. Something's not right at the top," said board member Betty Maiola.

Beverly Rodeschin, a member of both the select board and county delegation, expressed concerns about future spending at the local level. "What happens when we go to town and school meetings next year?" she asked. "We've got to find a solution to this deficit."

Franklin was critical of the timing of an initial press release concerning the deficit by Jeff Goff, a member of the Claremont City Council. "Goff made it very clear this was for political reasons," Franklin said.

Franklin said the suggestion of communities withholding tax payments to the

county was a "terrible idea." It was the hook to get everyone's attention, he added.

Both Nichols and Virginia Irwin, select board chairman, said the town had no intention of delaying its tax payment to the county.

"Taxes in the past have all been collected lawfully and I expect they will be this year. Don't threaten to break the law, I think that is very foolhardy," Franklin said.

"This is all a political gesture by Mr. Goff, like previous gestures," Franklin said. "It's much to do about nothing."

He also said retaining Genesis to operate the Sullivan County Nursing Home in the past was unsuccessful. "They cost us a lot of money and gave us very little in return," he stated.